15 November 1965

Miss Marjorie McAlinden
California Farmer
Room 402 - 2412 W. Seventh St.
Los Angeles, Calif. 90057

Dear Miss McAlinden:

This last lot is not too difficult though I need more information about some to give a definitive identification.

No. 1 - You are quite right that this is the California-nutmeg, Torreya californica Torr. of the Yew Family Taxaceae. It occurs in the Coast Ranges from Santa Cruz to Mendocino cos. and along the western slope of the Sierra Nevada from Tulare to Tehama cos. Its nearest relative is T. taxifolia of the wooded ravines and bluffs along the Apalachicola River of western Florida. I know nothing about the edibility of the seeds but I would not recommend testing such edibility, for the seeds of the related yew, Taxus, are poisonous, containing the alkaloid, taxine, a heart depressant.

No. 2 - This is certainly a Cupressus, and from the shape of the drawn cone, the seeds, and the foliage I would guess that it is C. sempervirens L. var. sempervirens. The commonly cultivated var. fastigiata has erect branches, forming a narrow columnar crown. The limbs are described as spreading by your correspondent thus ruling out the latter variety. It does very well in cultivation in southern California for it is apparently native to the Mediterranean region. If the Cupressus, on the other hand is C. macrocarpa Hartw., the Monterey Cypress, which the cones and seeds resemble also, it may not do so well away from the seacoast.

No. 3.- This is Melia azedarach, the Chinaberry Tree, cultivated by almost every sharecropper cabin in the southeastern states. It does have white berries and is indeed a messy tree. (We have one in our backyard in Florida.) The umbrella tree is the var. umbraculiformis Berckm. has a flattened, umbrella-shaped crown and is said to have originated in Texas. It is commonly grown in California as s stree t and shade tree. I presume the leaves enclosed are from this variety.

No. 4 - Is a juvenile form of some species of Cupressaceae. In the nursery trade such juveniles are all called Retinospora because they are almost impossible to identify at that stage if the origin is unknown.

Yes, we had a most enjoyable vacation up along the Coast to Oregon. We enjoyed most the seafood, redwood forests, and observing the shore birds, sea otters (esp. at Point Lobos and Point Pinos), sea-lions, seals, California elk, and the California pitcher plants, Darlingtonia californica, in Del Norte Co.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Thorne